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Message Text

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12
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 /059 W
---------- 120374
R 301135Z JAN 76
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3702

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FOLLOWING SENT ACTION NEW DELHI INFO CALCUTTA AND MADRAS
FROM BOMBAY JAN 30, 1976 REPEATED FOR YOU

QUOTE
BOMBAY 0240

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT IN
SUBJECT: MAHARASHTRA CABINET RESHUFFLE

REF: BOMBAY 208

1. IT HAS BEEN AN OPEN SECRET IN MAHARASHTRA POLITICAL CIRCLES FOR SOME TIME THAT CHIEF MINISTER S.B.CHAVAN HAS WANTED TO RESHUFFLE HIS CABINET TO CLEAN OUT THE SUPPORTERS OF FORMER CHIEF MINISTER V.P.NAIK AND BRING IN HIS OWN PEOPLE. IN PARTICULAR, CHAVAN REPORTEDLY WANTS TO EASE OUT MINISTER OF FINANCE M.D.CHAUDHARI, INDUSTRIES MINISTER N.M.TIDKE AND IRRIGATION MINISTER VASANTRAO-DADA PATIL (CONSIDERED THE NUMBER TWO IN THE CABINER, WITH WHOM CHAVAN'S RELATIONS HAVE BEEN STRAINED OF LATE). MANY TIMES OVER THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS THE RESHUFFLE WAS THOUGHT TO BE IMMINENT AND THE DEPARTURE OF A.R.ANTULAY FOR THE AICC (REFTEL) WAS CONSIDERED BY MANY AS THE OPENING CHAVAN NEEDED TO MOVE AHEAD WITH HIS REORGANIZATION.

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2. SACHIVALAYA SOURCES TELL US THAT THE RESHUFFLE, LIKELY TO BE

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COMPLETED BEFOREE ARCH 1, WILL BE A MINOR ONE AT THE INSISTENCE
OF MRS GANDHI. ACCORDING TO THESE SOURCES, THE PRIME MINISTER
FEARS THAT MAJOR CHANGES IN MAHARASHTRA AT THIS TIME MIGHT
ENCOURAGE OTHER STATES TO PUSH FOR CHANGES, AND SHE CONSIDERS ITO
PREFERABLE AT THIS STAGE NOT TO ENCOURAGE MAJOR CHANGES IN ANY
STATES IF THEY CAN BE AVOIDED. THUS CHAVAN IS PLACED IN THE UNEN-
VIABLE POSITION OF CONTINUING IN OFFICE WITH A CABINET NOT OF
HIS OWN CHOOSING.

3. CHAVAN HAS LONG BEEN RECOGNIZED AS THE PRIME MINISTER'S MAN,
CHOSEN BY HER WHEN V.P.NAIK WAS EASED OUT IN FEB, 1975. LESS A
POLITICIAN THAN AN ADMINISTRATOR, HE HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO BUILD
ANY PERSONAL SUPPORT IN HIS CABINET OR IN THE STATE PARTY ORGANI-
ZATION. HE HAS REMAINED IN POWER ONLY BECAUSE OF MRS GANDHI'S
BACKING, AND WE HEAR THAT HIS OPPONENTS HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR AN
OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS THEIR UNHAPPINESS WITH HIM. CHAVAN'S
MINISTERIAL COLLEAGUES REPORTEDLY COMPLAIN THAT CHAVAN MAKES MOST
OF THE DECISIONS REGARDING THE STATE HIMSELF--PRESUMABLY WITH
GUIDANCE FROM NEW DELHI--WITHOUT CONSULTING THEM. ADDITIONALLY,
MANY OF THEM CRITICIZE CHAVAN FOR GIVING TOO MUCH IMPORTANCE TO
BPCC PRESIDENT RAJNI, A FACTOR WHICH THEY BELIEVE HAS CONTRIBUTED
SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE INCREASE IN PATEL'S POWER OVER THE PAST YEAR.
AS A FINAL POINT, MANY IN THE RULING PARTY BELIEVE THAT CHAVAN IS
UNNECESSARILY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MRS
GANDHI'S 20-POINT PROGRAM AS HE CONTINUES TO CURRY FAVOR WITH THE
PRIME MINISTER.

4. COMMENT: CHAVAN'S APPOINT TO HIS POST BY MRS GANDHI AND
HIS INABILITY TO CHANGE HIS CABINET WITHOUT DELHI APPROVAL POINT
TO THE COMPLETE LOSS OF AUTONOMY BY THE STATE LEVEL PARTY LEADERS
AND EMPHASIZE THE CENTRALIZATION OF POWER IN NEW DELHI. CHAVAN
REPORTEDLY MADE TWO OR THREE TRIPS TO DELHI TO PERSUADE MRS.
GANDHI TO LET HIM MOVE AHEAD WITH CHANGES IN A CABINET WHICH
HE CONSTITUTIONALLY HEADS BUT APPARENTLY WITH NO SUCCESS AT ALL.
 SIGNED COURTNEY
UNQUOTE
SAXBE

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